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Somerville takes inventory on trees

The Boston Globe

By Danielle Dreilinger, Globe Correspondent | November 23, 2009

Somerville's early-summer tree inventory has produced piles of data like falling leaves, said Urban Tree Initiative coordinator Brad Arndt. Somerville has ... drumroll ... 11,062 trees on city-managed land, plus 244 planting sites and 66 stumps.

The total spans 101 species, though almost one-third are maples, considered troublesome in tight urban quarters. According to the report, no single kind of tree should amount for more than 10 percent of the total. Other prevalent tree types in Somerville are pear, ash, honey locust, linden, and sycamore. For an urban area, most are in pretty good shape, Arndt said. The consultants recommended taking down only 868.

Upcoming data analysis will focus on the "ecological services standpoint," Arndt said, to find out how much energy the trees are saving the city by cleaning the air and sequestering carbon. The city will also make projections on how these trees affect property values. According to the report's initial analysis, you should think twice before carving that heart into bark: Each of Somerville's public trees has an estimated value of over \$1,400.

Arndt said the basic data should be online before the end of the year, with training available for interested parties. He's also releasing a draft management plan from the consultants, though he cautions that the city will have to "weave in our own resource reality."

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